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IN 3 HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, April 16, 1931.

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Frocks for Windows." Information from Miss Bess Viemont, Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

Bulletin available: "Window Curtaining."

"A penny for your thoughts," I said to my Next-Door Neighbor, when I found her standing before the big bay window in her living room.

"My thoughts?" she asked. "Well, this morning they are centered on spring frocks."

"Gracious. Are you still planning clothes for your family? I should have thought, with all those new Easter clothes, that you wouldn't be thinking of new ones just yet."

My Neighbor laughed and said, "Just now I'm planning to dress up my windows, not my children, in new frocks. Don't you think some summery curtains would be nice in this room? You know I never have been happy with these heavy ornate draperies. They were a donation from one of Jim's elderly relatives and he felt we ought to use them or she might be offended. But they never have been what I wanted in this room. The color is wrong, in the first place, and then they aren't suited to the windows. So, instead of forming part of the background of the room, as every good curtain should do, they have always been the most conspicuous thing in sight. I don't believe in mixing sentiment for relatives with house furnishing, Aunt Sammy. I've tried it several times and it is never successful. So I've decided at last to have some new curtains, made just to suit this room and this attractive group of windows."

My Neighbor went on to tell me that she believes dressing windows successfully is much like dressing people. Curtains should suit the type of window just as the garment should suit the person. A broad low window, for example, will look best with one kind of drapery, while a tall, narrow window will require a different sort of treatment. The way a curtain is made and put up, as well as the color and the fabric, all must be considered for the best effect. Good window costuming gives lines that suggest the spirit of the room and conform to its general proportions. If these proportions are poor, then curtains should be planned to help conceal some of the defects, just as a skillful dressmaker cuts garments for the stout lady that help make her look slender and others for the thin lady that prevent a gaunt or scrawny appearance.

"Suppose," I asked, "that you had a badly proportioned window like the one in my front bedroom. A short, fat, squat, ugly window that doesn't belong at all in that dignified, high-ceilinged room! How would you dress that window?"

"There are several ways to use curtains to help that window. First, you might choose side draperies of a fabric with vertical stripes or an up-and-down pattern to carry the eye in that direction instead of across. That will help make the window appear taller. Then, you can hang these draperies so that they are spread over part of the window on each side. That will reduce the expanse of glass."

"Please go on and tell me how you would dress a tall narrow window to make it appear average in height and width."

"In this case you would try to cut down the appearance of height, so, in choosing material, you might buy that with horizontal or crosswise stripes or with a large sprawling design. Then the curtain rods might be mounted out on the wall or on the very edge of the window casing instead of on the casing, so that the side draperies would come just to the glass and give the window a broader effect. Draperies that are only long enough to come to the window sill lessen the apparent height still more."

My Neighbor looked thoughtfully at her windows.

"Curtains," she said, "can do so many pleasant and useful things for a room if they are chosen correctly. They can exclude an unpleasant view or frame an attractive one. They can soften or diffuse the light coming through the window. Of course, they play a large part in the decorative scheme of a room. If the right color and the right fabric is chosen, they will form a connecting link between the walls and other furnishings and make the room a harmonious whole."

She picked up a little booklet that was lying on a table nearby.

"I suppose you have guessed by this time where I got my ideas. Right out of this bulletin on window curtaining. I've heard you mention it, Aunt Sammy, but I never realized until lately what a useful little book it is for any one interested in dressing windows successfully. If the elderly relative who gave us these awful curtains had read that bulletin first, I'm sure she never would have embarrassed us with such an expensive but unfortunate present. I've found all sorts of useful information in these pages, Aunt Sammy. Simple advice about line, and proportion and color -- subjects that are baffling to a lot of us. Then there are pages about the different kinds of curtains and where to use them. It also tells how to take measurements and estimate the amount of material needed to make different kinds of curtains. I should have been studying that bulletin long ago, but I've learned a lot from it already this morning. Just the information I've needed all along."

Curtains for different rooms are most attractive when they are chosen to fit into a particular place. In many delightful homes only one set of curtains for each window are used and the same kind for all rooms. This scheme makes the windows look attractive from both outside and inside. It is also an economical arrangement.

And economy is well worth considering when dressing the windows of your house. To curtain the windows of even a five-room house requires about 60 yards of material, you know, and every few years the curtains must be replaced.

So price is to be considered along with appearance. Simple draperies that blend quietly into the rest of the room are safest for both pocketbook and appearance. Since we have to live with our curtains and look at them often, we want to be sure they will not become tiresome after a short time. If they are fancy or too vivid in color or have too conspicuous a design, they will compete with the other furnishings and spoil the restful atmosphere in the room. If a simple uniform curtaining scheme is used throughout a small house or apartment, simple draw curtains are a good choice, or colonial ruffled tie-back curtains.

What about curtains for summer? Shall we take them down as is done in some regions? Silks, to be sure, are often rotted by the sun and heavy draperies make rooms seem hot and stuffy. But cretonnes, printed linens, theatrical gauze or simple novelty chintzes are suitable the year around. It seems a mistake to leave the windows bare in summer when curtains are especially useful to keep out dust and subdue glaring sunlight. Even cotton crepe or gingham will relieve the stark bareness of uncurtained windows and will be suitable in a simply furnished interior. Or, if you prefer decorative shades and no curtains for summer, you can use awning-striped linen or flowered chintz mounted on rollers.

Friday: "Buffet Meals for Easy Entertaining."

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